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TAGS: [PREL](#) [GR](#) [MK](#)
SUBJECT: FM BAKOYANNIS PLEDGES ENGAGEMENT ON NIMETZ
PROPOSAL, HIGHLIGHTS REDLINES, AND ASKS FOR VISA WAIVER

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DANIEL SPECKHARD.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

Summary

¶1. (S) To help lay the groundwork for New York meetings on the Macedonia name issue, on September 16 Ambassador Speckhard spoke with Foreign Minister Bakoyannis to urge her not to reject the most recent Nimetz proposal, to engage constructively in negotiating textual changes Greece may need to be able to close the deal, and to avoid publicly criticizing the proposal or the Macedonian government in the press to score political points at home.

¶2. (S) The Foreign Minister said that in spite of strong political pressure, she and PM Karamanlis had agreed that they should not lose the momentum and push forward for a deal. She then highlighted two redlines:

-- Greece would never formally accept that their neighbors would be called "Macedonians;" and

-- Greece needed a "strong recommendation" in any implementing UNSC resolution for bilateral countries to use the new name (and a signal from the U.S. that we intended to do so as well).

¶3. (S) Bakoyannis said she would continue to do her best to get an agreement in the face of a difficult domestic political situation and a great deal of opposition, but she asked that the U.S. help as well. In this regard, while there could be no trade off, she emphasized that movement on visa waiver (VWP) for Greece was critical to create positive feelings in the U.S.-Greek relationship that could help counter the critics that are arguing that Greece should wait until the next Administration before reaching an agreement on the name issue. Ambassador Speckhard repeatedly emphasized the importance of engaging actively with Nimetz on his most recent proposal and avoiding any criticism of the proposal by the Macedonians. On VWP, the Ambassador noted his ongoing commitment to moving this issue through the bureaucracy. END SUMMARY.

Pressing the Greeks to Engage Constructively

¶4. (S) Ambassador Speckhard spoke with FM Bakoyannis by phone on September 16 (Bakoyannis was in Paris for meetings with France/EU and then on her way to New York for the UNGA) to highlight our desire for Greece to engage constructively on the most recent Nimetz proposal and to avoid any situation where Greece is publicly criticizing the Nimetz proposal or the Macedonian leadership -- and thus undercutting prospects

for success. The Ambassador emphasized that Greece should not reject the Nimetz proposal and should engage Nimetz on the specifics by negotiating potential textual changes that Greece may need in order to reach a deal.

15. (S) Bakoyannis responded that in spite of pressure by the opposition and many in the government to wait for the next U.S. Administration, she was determined to maintain the momentum to see if they could get a deal. She said she had discussed this with Prime Minister Karamanlis who shared the view that "they should not give into the opposition." Greece will not reject the most recent Nimetz proposal, and there will be "no break" in the negotiations. Bakoyannis said she and PM Karamanlis want to "move forward, given the current momentum." However, she returned repeatedly to the difficult domestic political context and unhelpful actions by Macedonian PM Gruevski - who has "insulted Greece" and daily was making very unhelpful statements. She specifically asked that the U.S. put "greater pressure" on Gruevski to tone down the rhetoric. The Ambassador noted that we have encouraged the Macedonian government to avoid rhetoric, but he also reiterated the importance of not responding to perceived slights from the Macedonians.

Redlines

16. (S) While noting that Greece is still "formulating its reply" to Nimetz on his most recent proposal, and without going into details of the proposal, Bakoyannis said that she and PM Karamanlis had two "clear red lines" that they would be sharing with Nimetz:

-- Ethnicity: Greece could never sign off on an agreement in which its northern neighbors were called "Macedonians". She noted that the two and a half million Greeks would not understand this." Left unstated

was the fact that PM Karamanlis is one of them. There seemed to be some way to distinguish them from Greek Macedonians. (NOTE: PM Advisor Bitsios has told us in the past that while they understood that in reality their neighbors would informally be called "Macedonians," they could never agree to a document where this was formally or officially established. END NOTE.)

-- Bilateral Usage: Greece will insist on that a implementing UNSC resolution contain a "strong recommendation" for bilateral countries to use the new name. In this context, she added that Greece needed a signal that the U.S. intended to use the new name bilaterally. If other countries weren't going to use the name, "Gruevski would have won" and there would be no real benefit to Greece to an agreement.

Improving the U.S./Greece Bilateral Climate - VWP

17. (S) Bakoyannis said that she believes it is still possible to get an agreement and "creative solutions" can be found to solve the remaining issues if there is a will in Skopje. She pledged that she will continue to do her best to reach an agreement, in spite of a difficult domestic political situation, which would mitigate against such steps. (NOTE: Karamanlis' ruling New Democracy party is now polling lower than major opposition party PASOK for the first time since Karamanlis took office. END NOTE). She then said that she needed U.S. "help," and asked where VWP stood. The Ambassador responded that there has been some movement on the proposed bilateral MOU and that it was back with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), but that he was not yet in a position to share a U.S. response to Greece's proposals.

18. (S) Bakoyannis said she was trying to keep an open mind amidst rumors that VWP had been held up for political reasons or to punish Greece, but was finding it increasingly harder to do so. She noted that postponing VWP played into the

hands of the opposition and fed public attitudes to encourage waiting for the next Administration, adding that most believe the next U.S. Administration may be more "understanding" of Greek priorities. Bakoyannis reiterated that she and PM Karamanlis were committed to solving the name issue, but the U.S. must help to create a more positive environment for U.S.-Greek relations, given how politically tough this was. VWP was an important part of this. Ambassador Speckhard noted his ongoing commitment and efforts to move VWP for Greece through the U.S. bureaucracy, and promised to pass back to Washington the Foreign Minister's observations in this area, but did not respond further to her on this issue.

COMMENT

19. (S) Although the easiest thing for the Greeks is to stall on the name issue, given the current domestic political environment, the FM seemed genuine in her willingness to take the political risk and push forward on a deal if a way could be found to accommodate their red lines. The fact that she invoked the PM's name adds credibility to this view. The Greeks also appear to believe that Gruevski is under pressure because he may suspect any future U.S. Administration will be less sympathetic to his cause. As a result, while remaining skeptical about the chances for success, they remain open to any further movement from Skopje to reach agreement.

10. (S) COMMENT CONT.: However, the FM remains politically exposed on this issue given her pro-U.S. image in Greece. The recent articles linking the U.S. lack of responsiveness on VWP to the name issue only make matters worse. While explicit linkage between VWP and the name issue would be politically embarrassing and could undermine an agreement, she and the PM need to be able to show concrete benefits of the U.S.-Greek relationship to be able to go the final mile on the name negotiations.
SPECKHARD